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To: Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly (Senator Cathy Osten, Senator Paul Formica, and Presentative Toni Walker, Tri Chairs)

RE: Restoration of the Funding for the Connecticut Humanities Council, Inc. within the Budget of the Department of Economic and Community Development

Greetings!

As a librarian in one of the poorest cities in the country which is in one of the wealthiest counties, my library has limited resources to provide the level of programming that we would like. Fortunately, we have the Connecticut Humanities Council to help us offer new activities and share some of our resources with the rest of the state.

I have been personally and professionally involved with the Book Voyagers program since its inception. I have had the privilege of being a discussion leader and of creating a few discussion series. I have led series at about 15 different libraries, mostly small ones that do not have the time to come up with a new series and create the publicity for it. CHC loans the library multiple copies whose cost would be proportionally prohibitive for a tiny library. The warm reception of the libraries and of their patrons has been matched by the enthusiasm and intelligence of the participants. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a young child and her parent enjoying a book together or a group of kids getting into Harry Potter trivia competitions!

The discussions for adults go beyond the living room book club through the presentation of the scholar/leaders who are experienced in drawing out the ideas and truths of a particular title. With a "bank" of scholars to draw on, most of

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whom are affiliated with universities and colleges in the area, and a broad range of series topics, CHC had created a first class program for residents.

The Connecticut Center for the Book is now in the CHC fold after many years at Hartford Public Library. This is a natural fit and gives the Center a broader audience across the state. The Book Awards program which is quite dynamic was mothballed for a few years but is being revived in 2017. Recognizing our homegrown authors and illustrators enhances Connecticut's image as a cultural center.

The Bridgeport History Center at my library is one of many contributors to ConnecticutHistory.org . With this user-friendly website, individuals and classes can easily delve into archives and collections about our state from the comfort of home (or school!). Digitizing and sharing the treasures found in historical societies and archives preserves them from being manhandled and provides equal access to those interested. I am excited about the new Teach It initiative for creating programs for my student patrons.

My relationship to CHC is just one of many that CHC has fostered over the years with libraries, schools, archives, historical societies, genealogists, scholars, and teachers. The value of these relationships is priceless. However, the elimination of the opportunities CHC provide would radically and negatively affect us all.

Please restore the \$173 million appropriation for the Connecticut Humanities Council that was originally part of the 2016-17 budget. And please keep the CHC budget line in all future state budgets. The history and culture of our state are in your hands!

Thank you.

Bina Williams
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